

## [Mrs. Ernestine Weiss Faudie]

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Life History

FOLKLORE:

Miss Effie Cowan, P. W.

McLennan County, Texas,

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Interview with Mrs. Ernestine Weiss Faudie, Riesel, Texas.

(White pioneer)

"I was born in Dembow Province, Posen, Germany. My father was named Frederick Weiss, and followed his ancestor Louis Weiss, who came with the colony that settled at Fredericksburg, Texas. My father settled near Brenham, Texas, in the year 1853. The year that I was born, as I was a five month old infant when they left Germany.

"There were farms and ranches where they settled and over at the colony of Fredericksburg there was quite a little town, I have the list of names of the men who were

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in business, among them was Louis Weiss who was a tinner, the records show that thirty eight men operated ten different types of industrial business in the town: This town and New Braunfels were the main German settlements when my father came to Texas in 1853, The Germans around Brenham had drifted from these places to other settlements.

“To the colony at Brenhum my father came and this is where I was raised; we had the ordinary little schools and the teachers were mostly the one teacher schools. They were paid very little but then it was something to even have a school. So it is not surprising that the young people married early and raised their families in large numbers, to what they do now.

“I was seventeen when I married William Hamburg. We came to the little settlement called Sandy Creek where the town of Riesel is today, but it that time there was nothing but ranches and the farms over near the Brazos river. [??] 2 We lived there for a few years and the grasshoppers came and ate up our crops, so we moved back to Brenham and lived there for twelve years. Then in 1890 we came back to this part of the country and lived at the Perry settlement until late years.

“I reared nine children by my first husband, they are; Mrs. John Scharlach who has lived by the Methodist Church in the Myers settlement on the Mart-Waco road, for the past forty years; Mrs. Fred Witting of Perry, deceased; and Mrs. Louis Bohmfalk, whose husband was a Methodist minister, now deceased; Mrs. Arthur [Grebe?] of Mart and William Hamburg and Albert, of Dallas; Mrs. Ida Busse and another son Fred of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

“My first husband died in 1900 and in 1905 I married Judge J. Faudie who is living with me now. My father had two brothers to come with him from Germany and were in the Confederate army. Their names were August and Fritz Weiss. They were sent back home from the war on a furlough but had to return and August was captured by the Yankees and taken prisioner and made to walk all the way to the prison. He was later exchanged

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and came home. The other brother Fritz, came home after the war was over and took tuberculosis and died from this which he contracted in the army.

“When any of the soldiers on either side came thro our place they took anything they could find, the rebels felt that they had a right to it for they were fighting for us. They took our horses and killed our hogs and cows to eat, and took our corn. When the blockade was on and we could not get coffee we made it out of sweet potatoes. We cut them up and dried them and boiled them and drank this for coffee. 3 “There was a grist mill close by our place and they ground the meal real fine and crushed it and called it flour; anyway we made our light bread out of this ground and crushed corn. We cooked over a fire place with a big dutch oven. We spun and wove the cotton thread to make our clothes. And speaking of the soldiers I remember an incident that is amusing now but at the time, to the neighbor it was anything but amusing. When a group of soldiers passed this neighbors, she tied a hog to the bed post so they would not see it, but they stopped for a drink of water and heard the hog grunting and so came into the room and took the hog and barbecued it, out in the year and ate it before the neighbor's very eyes.

“When we first came to this country we lived in a log cabin, but we had it made good and comfortable and we did not mind that; we were so happy to have all the land that we could cultivate and the stock which was so plentiful, so different from where we lived in Germany. When the war, which they called the Civil War, came I remember that my brother-in-law, Henry Hamburg, did not want to fight, as he did not believe in war and so he went to Mexico and then up to the North where he stayed until the war was over.

“My family came to the Perry settlement in 1890 and there was a big ranch called the Stone Ranch, they had lots of cattle and horses and the cowboys would round up the cattle twice a year and take them to the markets. I think they took them to Houston or Galveston and shipped them by way of the Gulf to New York and the foreign markets. We lived in the Schlimbech settlement; the community was thinly 4 settled but we were a settlement of people from the old country and we kept up our interest, thro the papers in

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the old country, and our way of living, also our mother tongue and so we did not feel so isolated from Germany altho we became naturalized American citizens soon after coming to this country.

"I will tell you the story of the Indianola flood that came in 1875. My brother-in-law who did not go to the war, Henry Hamburg, came back when it was over and became a Methodist minister, (most of the churches were either Lutheran or Methodist then). He was in charge of the Methodist church at this place when the big storm came, he and his wife both were drowned and most of the inhabitants. At that time and during the Civil War, Indianola was an important port of Texas and it meant to Texas, what Galveston does to us now.

"There were just a few of the buildings left when the storm was over. A few feet of the outside wall was all that remained of the once big department store of Lichtenstein's and Alexander's. After the flood Mrs. Lichenstein moved to Corpus Christi and went into business. The court house, which in those days was at least fifty or sixty feet from the bay, has later been washed almost entirely away by the water of Matagorda Bay. It is said that the walls of these two buildings and a few crumbling cement cisterns and a few old safes that were in the store is all that is left as a reminder of the once second most important port of Texas.

"The story of Indianola reads like a story book for children. They claim that La Salle was the first to make a camp there while he was trying to find the mouth of the Mississippi River. However, it was made the County seat of Calhoun County in 1846. Many of the buildings and underground cisterns were made of concrete so this is why those the storm left stood. It was said that the stage left twice a week for California and the prairie schooners carried the overland freight and the [Morgan?] Line steamers were used for passengers and freight by water.

"Another story is that gold and silver bullion was brought from Chihuahua, Mexico, for shipment to the mint at New Orleans. Instead of the horses and carriages the ox-wagons

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were familiar sights on the streets of this little coast town. It is said that hides and tallow were among the more important commodities. After the cattle were killed and [skinner?] the carcasses were ahuled beyond the city limits and dumped, and the fresh beef was used for fattening hogs and the people in the town were welcome to all the meat they wanted at the slaughter house.

“Natural ice from New England was shipped by steamer from Boston, army goods were shipped from Baltimore thro Indianola to the forts at El Paso and San Antonio. The number of people in the town in 1875 were close to 3,500 and town lots sold for a good price. So the town was one of the best in Texas until Sept, 16, 1875 when the tropical storm came. The citizens hurried to the business buildings and private houses that were known to be the stoutest, but only a few escaped with their lives.

“It was said that many were forced out of the second stories when the water rose in them and had to seek safety in hastily constructed rafts which they made from the sections of the floors and walls of the houses they were in. Some of them were thoughtful enough to have ropes 6 and they were lashed to the rafts by them, but many were drowned when the buildings they were in collapsed and the people were crushed or drowned.

“There were many stories of heroism that were told by those who were saved. They told about the two prisoners named William Taylor and Joe Blackburn, who were both up for first degree murder. They had been placed in the court house and during the height of the storm both frequently swam thro the court house windows to rescue some drowning person. After the storm was over desolation met the eye everywhere. My brother-in-law, his family, and his home had dissappeared and were never seen again, altho my husband hoped for months to hear of him.

“Capital was timid about investing again and most of those who lived thro this storm moved away to escape another like fate. And so when the second hurricane come in 1886 and was said to be even greater intensity the few people who were left read the

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signs in time to evacuate the town and the havoc was not as destructive to the lives of the inhabitants.

“After the storm of 1886 the old port of Indianola was abandoned. I have told you this true story of the coastal storms to show you what the old pioneers had to contend with, not only the pests of the insects on their crops, or the hardships of the lack of the comforts of life, but the very elements of nature, the drouths, the floods, and the unsettled condition of the country, even to desperadoes and murderers but never for an instant did we lose our faith in the future 7 which was always before us, to look into when the time should come when we could lie down to our sleep and not feel that any calamity would befall us.

“And now in my old age I look back over the past from the time that I can remember and think of the many friends and kinsman who came over here from the old country, and who have passed on to the far away land and I say in my heart to them all:

“Auf-weider-se-hen.”

(Till we meet again!).